

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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R 080819Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5284

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 5187

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PINS KS

SUBJECT: ROKG CLAIMS BISHOP REPENTS

1. KOREAN PRESS REPORTS THAT AT AUGUST 7 EMERGENCY COURT MARTIAL SESSION BISHOP CHI CONFESSED TO SUPPORTING NFDYS CONSPIRACY; VIOLATING COURT ORDER NOT TO LEAVE HIS RESIDENCE; AND ILLEGALLY DISTRIBUTING ANTI-GOVERNMENT PRINTED MATTER. PRESS ALSO PROMINENTLY REPORTS THAT BISHOP WAS CONTRITE, EXPRESSED GREGRET FOR PAST POLITICAL ACTS; AND PROMISED THAT IN THE FUTURE HE WOULD RESTRICT HIS ACTIVITIES TO STRICTLY RELIGIOUS DUTIES.

2. ROKG IS GOING ALL OUT TO PERSUADE PUBLIC AND FOREIGN OBSERVERS OF JUSTNESS OF ITS CASE. PRIME MINISTER ADDRESSED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEFENDING ROG RIGHT AND LEGALITY OF TRIAL, NOT BECAUSE BISHOP IS A COMMUNIST, BUT BECAUSE HE HAD ENGAGED IN ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES. CHIEF LEGAL SPOKESMAN OF MINISTRY OF DEFENSE YI YOUNG WOO CONFIRMED TOHS REPORTERS ROKG VERSION OF BISHOP'S DECLARATION OF REGRET, AND AMPLIFIED IT BY SAYING THAT THE BISHOP'S LAWYER IM, WHO IS NOW ALSO BEING HELD FOR TRIAL, HAD "TRICKED AND ENTICED"

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CHI INTO MAKING HIS ANTI-ROKG STATEMENT OF CONSCIENCE

AFD INTO LEAVING HIS RESTRICTED QUARTERS. ACCORDING SPOKESMAN YI, BISHOP TOLD COURT HE WOULD NOT DO IT AGAIN. YI FURTHER SAID THAT CARDINAL KIM HAD BEEN DENIED REQUEST TO ATTEND TRIAL, BUT THAT BISHOP CHI'S BROTHER WAS ADMITTED AS OBSERVER.

3. ROKG VERSION OF TRIAL IS LARGELY AT VARIANCE WITH INFORMATION RECEIVED BY EMBASSY FROM CATHOLIC SOURCES QUOTING THE BISHOP'S BROTHER. ACCORDING TO THIS VERSION, BISHOP SAT THROUGH TRIAL SESSION APATHETICLY, SIMPLY NODDING TO STATEMENTS ADDRESSED TO HIM. AT THE END OF THE SESSION HE IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID: "IF I HAVE COMMITTED A CRIME, SENTENCE ME TO DEATH. IF I HAVE NOT COMMITTED A CRIME AND IF YOU ARE GOING TO REDUCE MY SENTENCE AT SECOND OR THIRD APPEAL, THEN DECLARE ME INNOCENT*"

4. CATHOLIC PRIEST CONVEYING STORY TO EMBASSY, SPECULATED THAT ROKG MAY BE PLANNING TO MITIGATE OR SUSPEND BISHOP'S SENTENCE AND THAT STORIES OF CONFESSION MAY BE PART OF ROKG EFFORT TO SAVE FACE.

5. SOURCE ALSO REPORTED ON CARDINAL KIM'S CONVERSATION WITH BISHOP CHI ON AUGUST 5, SAYING THAT WHILE BISHOP HAD NOT BEEN BEATEN, CARDINAL WAS CONCERNED OVER HIS PHYSICAL AND MENTAL STATE. BISHOP IS REPORTEDLY APATHETIC TO POINT WHERE HE HAS DIFFICULTY TALKING. CARDINAL ATTRIBUTED THIS TO PROLONGED INTERROGATION, AND ISOLATION OF BISHOP. CARDINAL ALSO REPORTEDLY SAID THAT HE WOULD NOT MAKE ANY DECISION ON CHURCH ACTION REGARDING BISHOP UNTIL AFTER END OF TRIAL. HE IS EXPECTED TO GO TO ROME TO ATTEND CONSISTORY AT END OF AUGUST.

6. ACCORDING TO G-2 SOURCE, EMERGENCY COURT MARTIAL TRIAL SESSIONS FOR BISHOP CHI, EX-PRESIDENT YUN PO-SON, KIM DONG IL, KIM CHONG KUK, AND REV. PARK HYONG KYU DID NOT TAKE PLACE TODAY AS SCHEDULED, AND NO INFORMATION AVAILABLE WHEN THEY WILL RESUME. DESPITE SOME SPECULATION TO CONTRARY, NO INDICATION AVAILABLE THAT THIS REFLECTS CONFIDENTIAL

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CHANGE OF ROKG POLICY.
HABIB

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